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ABSTRACT

Noting the sharp decline in Latin studies in England, the author reviews the rationale and educational objectives which serve as the foundation for existing programs. Commentary is made on the roles of science, history, literature, and philosophy in the curriculum. The function of classical studies is seen to be related largely to the development of the mental faculties and to serve as the basis for further study in the arts. Reforms are suggested at all levels of instruction and particularly for "O-Level" examinations. (RL)

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# A theory of classical education III
# The Classics in the sixties

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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*Misled in estimating words, not only*
*By common inexperience of youth,*
*But by the trade in classic niceties,*
*The dangerous craft of culling term and phrase*
*From languages that want the living voice*
*To carry meaning to the natural heart.*

W. WORDSWORTH
*Prelude* VI, 107-112

*Doctor Blimber's young gentlemen. . .were, prematurely, full of carking anxieties. They knew no rest from the pursuit of stony-hearted verbs, savage noun-substantives, inflexible syntactic passages, and ghosts of exercises that appeared to them in their dreams . . . a young gentleman . . . at the end of the first twelvemonth had arrived at the conclusion, from which he never afterwards departed, that all the fancies of the poets, and lessons of the sages, was a mere collection of words and grammar, and had no other meaning in the world.*

C. DICKENS, *Dombey and Son*
(Everyman Edition), p. 134

LATIN – *For disposal, following sale of Western Civilization by Oxford and Cambridge Universities, several thousand Latin grammars; one penny a dozen for quick sale, or would exchange lot for a few spanners, comics, coshes, or bicycle chains – Arjom, Box F.* 1437, *The Times*, EC4

Personal Column of *The Times*,
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Latin and Greek are dead: long live Latin and Greek. So often in the past this has been the rallying cry of the professional classical teacher or scholar, showing a fine unconcern for the world and for his pupils around him. For over 100 years the classics as an education have been dying, and the prophets have been saying they would: and we wake up in the 1960s to find that the prophecies have almost come true.

There are two stages to this long decline into moribundity, both hotly denied at the time they were taking place: first, the period during which the classics slipped from being the central school discipline, the core subject in the curriculum, now at last recognized as having happened over half a century ago; second, the current period during which elementary Latin has begun to wither gradually and in thirty years from now may finally die as a main school subject.

None the less the traditional classical education could still be a vital humanist discipline of real value – *could* still be, because, both in itself and as at present organized, it is vulnerable to damaging criticism.

Inevitably in languages that are dead great reliance is placed on the authority of the extant writings of the ancient authors. We can after all discover the meaning of words or idioms only by a careful study of their usage in its context. No reference to modern developments is possible. But this proper reliance on authority is over-emphasized in the classical curriculum, particularly in teaching composition (in prose or verse) to the young.

A boy who is set to compose a piece of Latin or Greek prose is limited by the nature of the piece of English he is given to translate into the ancient language and by the style of the ancient author which he is urged to imitate. He can neither write an original Greek or Latin essay nor, at an advanced level, write without reference to the way in which a particular Greek or Latin author would have been likely to say the same thing. To some extent imitation becomes a substitute for thinking. To achieve even a remotely similar result he finds it wise to use only those words and expressions known to have been used by his model. While, then, his linguistic sensibilities may be refined, constant reference to lexicon or dictionary to check what he has written often inculcates an excessive timidity in the use of words and deadens the impulse to originality. And to what end? Even if the average student could write exactly like Thucydides, Thucydides has already done it. Those who learn to paint often

find it helpful to copy a recognized master's work, but not to the exclusion of original productions of their own, not as the only method of learning to compose.

The same criticism can in some degree be made of the reverse process of translation from Greek or Latin into English. The high standard of accuracy insisted on by the teacher tends too often to produce a type of translationese, at its worst not far removed from pidgin English, at its best stilted and lifeless. It is thought more important in unseens that some individual sentences should be translated with great accuracy, and some left comparatively meaningless, than that the general sense of the whole should be understood. Superficiality is considered a far worse fault than pedantry. In his linguistic exercises the classical student is not encouraged to spread his wings and fly; rather, he must shuffle along with continuous backward glances over his shoulder to make sure that he is not offending his ancient, let alone his modern, mentor. This timidity of approach lessens the value of the linguistic training which has so much to commend it.

Again, there is often in a classical education too much study of the past without reference to the present. The past is valued for itself alone, and thus the importance of the present and the future sometimes comes to be overlooked. The past may often explain some aspect of the present predicament, but it should not be the sole, or even the primary, consideration. Too much knowledge of the past is more likely to inhibit than to encourage effective action or decision in the present.

Attention to detailed linguistic scholarship in a study as difficult as the classics is vital, but its value has too often been exaggerated. Too much time is still devoted to the minutiae of linguistic usage, too little to what the language is trying to convey. Many a boy or girl can explain a rare piece of syntax that he or she may meet two or three times in the course of all his schooldays, but will not be able to give a coherent account of the dramatic achievement of any one Greek tragedy. Is it not an interesting commentary on how little students of the classics appreciate

the substance of what they read that they so seldom feel any tension between the values of their own Christianized society and those of a world where the promiscuous amours of the gods and incestuous relationships were part of the traditional mythology, while homosexuality and slavery were accepted aspects of society? Gilbert Norwood, himself no mean classical scholar, expressed this point vividly many years ago, but it is still almost as true as it was then: 'Scholarship for the majority (of classical experts) has no more bearing upon their non-professional life than the reader's interest in chess or old china has upon his politics or religion. There is something grotesque in a man's spending his life upon Propertius and without a quiver of self-examination "sending down" an undergraduate who acts as Propertius acted. But that notion of "bringing the classics into relation with modern life", so far from being welcomed in most academic circles, is shunned as an indelicacy. To "sketch the career of Jugurtha" is all in the day's work; but to discuss what would have happened to that fascinating prince had he been a modern Indian rajah, and why it would have happened or failed to happen – all that is waste of time. What Plato says is admirably known: what he meant is often discussed; what he would have thought concerning present-day politics and society seldom; still less frequently the all-important questions: ought we to follow his teaching ourselves? If not, for what reasons?'[1] These are some of the more glaring defects in the present classical education, but it is encouraging that in recent years so many classical teachers have shown themselves aware of them and ready to consider drastic remedies. Professor Dodds's Presidential address at last year's meeting of the Classical Association and such journals as *Didaskalos* and *Arion* show that at last the Universities are beginning to re-examine what is and is not essential in a classical degree course. This is most heartening, for until Oxford and Cambridge (in this country) give a firm lead, the classical curriculum and the general approach to it in schools will remain as they are and as they have been for

[1] *The Wooden Man and Other Stories and Essays* (1926), 208-9.



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far too long. There is now a real prospect that a radical change of emphasis in the standard curriculum will take place, gradually perhaps, because it is not easy to slough off the deeply ingrained habits created by a long past, but nevertheless surely. It is high time that it did, for, if the classics are to continue to hold a serious place in education, development is urgently necessary.

It is necessary at three levels: in the full university honours course, in the less rigorous general degree (or subsidiary Honours) or sixth form curriculum designed for those who do not aim to be classicists, and in the even less specialized course that it is possible to devise for those, such as mathematicians or scientists in schools, who want or ought to know something of their cultural background.

At the specialist university level the linguistic techniques of translation for its own sake into and out of Latin and Greek should be regarded as substantially less important than the reading of the ancient authors to discover *what* they said rather than *how* they said it. Exercise in composition (a set piece of English verse or prose, translated into its Greek or Latin counterpart), valuable though it is in the early stages, should at the university be made alternative or perhaps, better still, optional, available for those with the appropriate flair to display their talents in it; even at school the amount of time spent on this could well be reduced to the minimum necessary for the development of the ability to read the classical authors with enough accuracy and speed for understanding, appreciation and enjoyment. As the French classical scholar, Marouzeau, observed as long ago as 1928, 'It is better to have an alert reader who knows how to interpret Cicero in a right sense and discover in his works the Latin world and Latin thought than a painstaking pupil who, as the result of all his school years, might be able to turn a page of Montesquieu into the Latin of Cicero'.[2] In the time thus gained (which would be considerable) wider and faster reading should be encouraged both within and beyond the few centuries

[2] *Journ. Rom. Stud.* XXVIII (1928), 207 f.

at present so assiduously studied. Among the new topics that could be included in such a revised curriculum would be those two fascinating ages that are so dark for the modern classical schoolboy or undergraduate, the Hellenistic period and the later Roman empire, as well as the influence of the classical authors and ideas on later centuries. It is remarkable that the long-established Oxford Greats course, much of whose popularity is due to the continuation of the study of philosophy beyond the classical period, has had as yet so few imitators elsewhere; and it is almost scandalous that a period so rich in firsthand historical material and so relevant to later developments in the history of western civilization as the fourth century AD should be a closed book for the average classical student. How frequent and how soundly based are the complaints of undergraduates who find themselves studying the fifth or first century BC for the third or fourth time within ten years! The civilization of Greece and Rome spanned well over ten centuries, but through force of habit or inertia too many classical scholars restrict their attention and that of their pupils to at most three or four – vital centuries, no doubt, but not so vital that they continue to stimulate the young mind constantly brought face to face with them and allowed no view beyond. It is after all on the dwindling number of classicists that the main burden of the interpretation of the past rests; classics as a subject will die unless in addition to scholarship these specialists have imagination and range.

Such a change of emphasis in the Honours classical course, and in preparation for it, may seem slight but would in fact achieve a striking transformation. Where there is room, however, for still more innovation and experiment is in courses designed for those who, while not wanting to become classicists with all the technical expertise in linguistic usage that such a training involves, nevertheless regard (or could easily be encouraged to regard) as valuable a serious study of the ancient Greco-Roman world. This group includes many intelligent boys and girls who study the classics in their traditional form, or French and Latin,

or History and Latin, and who abandon these subjects either when they leave school after A-level or as soon thereafter as they conveniently can at the university. A course of the greatest value and interest could be devised for these students which would not attempt to make them masters of Greek or Latin but would lead them to a genuine understanding of the Greeks' and Romans' achievements and of their significance for the present. Much of the philosophy, history, and literature would be read in translation, but not all. Just because, at the later stages, there would be so much less insistence on language for its own sake and so much more on the subject-matter of what was read, it would not be surprising if these students in fact gained at least as much value (though in a different way) from their study as the linguistic specialist. Instead of going up to the university with a thorough knowledge of a mere handful of Greek or Latin texts, they would have had time to read more widely *and* think more deeply about what they read. How many classicists have left school having read a page of Aristotle? And is it really more important that Aristotle should not be read at all until he is read at university in Greek than that at least some of his works should be read in translation? Similarly with that other Greek giant of philosophy, Plato: very few boys have read more than one of the ten books of his most important treatise by the time they reach the university, and that often the least valuable. There are several other such notable inadequacies in the present system.

A third type of classical course that needs immediate development is one aimed at scientists and mathematicians in the sixth forms of schools. With some such title as 'Our European Inheritance', and devised jointly by classicists, historians, and modern linguists, it would introduce the scientist to the most important aspects of his cultural past. If it is true that present-day western culture may be compared to 'a lake fed by the streams of Hellenism, Christianity, science, and democracy'[3] and that we are now in a technological age, the scientist is as much in need of education in the humanities as the arts

[3] *General Education in a Free Society* (Harvard Report), 211.

specialist of scientific enlightenment. To be an educated member of modern society the arts boy or girl must understand something of what science is about, and really stimulating scientific courses are urgently needed. But similar arts courses are of equal importance because it seems likely that, as our civilization continues to develop along its present lines, more and more children will take science and will be in positions in later life where a knowledge of social and political problems, of moral and aesthetic values, of the spiritual forces which make human existence worthwhile, will be essential. A civilization cut off from its past is grievously impoverished. Science cannot be an adequate substitute, for it is mainly concerned with the natural world in the present, not with human beings and their activities in the past.

A combination of history, literature and philosophy (the last only in its broadest sense) is the obvious corrective to the scientist's myopia. History records man's actions as a social and political being; literature reveals his emotions, his beliefs, his attitudes; philosophy discusses his efforts to understand his environment and his nature. A coherent, well-balanced study of this trio would provide a valuable humanistic education. To such a course the Classics would have a wealth of relevant matter to contribute. There are enough creative ideas in the Greco-Roman civilization – ideas which are still creative and central to an understanding of our own situation – to bring into sharper focus for the scientific boy or girl his somewhat hazy cultural ancestry.

Whatever is done, however, to produce good complementary courses at sixth form level to redress the balance upset by excessive specialization, those who teach will have to re-think their subjects drastically – and to some it will be a painful reappraisal – because teachers so easily get set in thought-grooves, and much science as taught today is singularly lacking in the scientific spirit, just as many of the humanities have become singularly dehumanized. Few teachers of Latin or Greek have at present any reason to be smug.

Still less can we afford to be complacent over our teaching of elementary Latin. Here it is essential not only that we know why we teach it, but also that we teach it with those ends in view. My justification indeed for going over this well-trodden ground once more is that, despite all that has been written on this subject, many teachers of elementary Latin still seem surprisingly unaware of the main issues.

Now that no university requires a knowledge of elementary Latin from all its matriculands, is there any case for its continued study on the present widespread scale? Three of the arguments often used to support elementary Latin by enthusiastic champions of the classics – the cultural heritage argument, the utilitarian argument, and the argument based on the excellence of those with a classical education – are all plainly irrelevant. As for the first, the amount and subject matter of Latin normally learnt by most boys and girls at this level is such that, if any understanding is gained of what Rome stood for, it is an understanding of her capacity to make war on less powerful neighbours – not surely an aspect to dwell on to-day. Moreover, anyone would, in far less time, gain more appreciation of his cultural past from reading a translation of Plato's Republic or Virgil's Aeneid than from his laborious attempts to translate the simpler passages of Caesar or Livy. As for utility, the direct usefulness of elementary Latin is nugatory. It gives a student some idea of the origins of many English words and may help his spelling. It equips him with enough Latin grammar and syntax to proceed to further study, but cannot be said to enable him without such study to understand medieval documents or the philology of the Romance languages. The fallacy of the third of this trio is too obvious to merit serious discussion.

The main traditional argument in favour of elementary Latin, however, is that which claims that the prime value of the language is the *training of the mind*. Latin, it is said, being a language of order and method, provides a unique mental discipline, cultivating clarity of thought, accuracy of expression, observation, concentration of attention, and exact understanding

of the meaning of words. It has the virtue of Mathematics and the Natural Sciences in instilling habits of mental precision while at the same time doing more than they in providing a humanist education. To quote a typical view by way of summary, 'translation from Latin to English or from English to Latin involves a real mental gymnastic – a toughening of the sinews of the mind and an exercising of the processes of thought'.[4]

How far can such a claim be substantiated? It has of course often been attacked by psychologists and others in the past on the ground that the view of the nature of the human mind that it presupposes is totally inadequate; that the mind does not consist of separate sinews, associated with clear thinking, or observation, or attention, which can be exercised like muscles and so strengthened for all sorts of work. We may learn to think clearly in one way (e.g. Mathematics) and not in another (e.g. English), to cultivate observation in one field (e.g. of linguistic usage) and be blind in another (e.g. birds or flowers). We may have a good memory for numbers (car, Premium Bonds, telephone) but not for faces. So it is not difficult to understand why some psychologists argue that the training of one memory-function does not necessarily result in the improvement of the others, that the training in expressing certain Greek or Latin ideas in English or vice versa is specific and improves only the ability to express those particular ideas.

But this objection is not so damaging as it may seem, for two reasons. First, the theory that training of a specific mental faculty has no transfer value (that is, does not automatically train the mind in general) has been drastically modified since it was first developed. Many psychologists would now agree that, while we may not assume that training the mind in one field necessarily makes it more effective in others, under certain conditions transfer does take place, especially where there is identity of subject-matter and method, and where those being taught are made conscious of the principles involved. Just as the

[4] T. E. Wright, *The Latin Contribution to a Liberal Education* (1949), 13-14.

different mental faculties proved on examination to be much less simple and clearcut than used to be believed, so it is now realized that the mind as a whole is highly complex, with its manifold activities so interrelated that its powers of associating like with like should not be underestimated.

Secondly, 'ideals' are generally agreed to be transferable. For example, while it may be true that the training in observation provided by the classics is largely specific, few will now deny that by such a training a boy can appreciate the value of having an ideal of exact observation, and that this ideal can be transferred to other activities. My prose compositions at school were full of inaccuracies until a bribe of 2/6 for every prose shown up free of mistakes quickly made me aware of the importance of observation in matters connected with the written word. The ideal of observation taught thus has been immensely valuable since, and my work would be much more inaccurate than it is but for that early training.

It remains true, however, that much of the transfer of the effect of the study of Latin to other studies is restricted to closely allied studies. This conclusion is confirmed by an American study made in the 1930s by Ch. Welden Jr., who, after a careful investigation, found that:

> 'a differential training in Latin, provided the differential training was acquired in private preparatory schools or after entering Yale College, would help a man to do work of better quality, as measured in terms of grades received, in certain specialised courses, such as French composition and the history of the Middle Ages, wherever the subject-matter of such courses was directly tied to the knowledge gained in a study of Latin, and would help a man to do work of better quality in a relatively intensive study of some few other fields where the background of knowledge gained in the study of Latin could serve rather directly as a source of information on the subject-matter of those fields. *There was no evidence at all of any value in a more extended study of Latin as an intellectual discipline, serving to extend the scope of intellectual capacity in whatever field it*

*might be applied.* These conclusions should be understood, of course, in terms of "Latin as taught" and "other subjects as taught", with the possibility remaining that some change in the type or method of instruction in Latin or some change in the manner of presentation of other subjects might affect the relationship between the extent of a man's background in Latin and the quality of his work in other academic fields.'[5]

So much depends on how the subject is taught. If it is properly taught, so as to illustrate general principles of thinking, these are transferable to other fields. While, then, it may readily be admitted that the extreme claims of the supporters of Latin, especially of elementary Latin, are exaggerated, those others who dismiss them out of hand as worthless are guilty of comparable exaggeration.

If we admit that there is something in the theory of transference, can we nevertheless claim that elementary Latin gives some general training in reasoning? Though large, and often exaggerated, claims for the effectiveness of Latin in this respect have often been made, Latin, even at the most elementary level, is peculiarly suited to the development of three important mental abilities, those of accuracy and thoroughness, of reflective thinking, and the ability to generalize.

Latin is sometimes called by schoolmasters a wasp-language, because the sting is in the tail of its words. Even in the simplest sentence you find yourself at a loss or you reach the wrong conclusion unless you look closely at each word individually as well as in relation to the whole sentence. Because Latin syntax and grammar are in themselves so precise, and have become still more so by not being subject to the normal evolution of a language that is living and therefore constantly changing, mistakes, when made, can be convincingly identified and exposed. Even a simple Latin sentence such as 'Dux frumentum civibus dedit' reveals its structure more closely than 'The general gave the citizens food'. And, if we consider a line of a well-known hymn, for instance,

[5] *Journ. Educ. Psych.* XXIV (1933), 481-97 (my italics).

'His chariots of wrath the deep thunderclouds form'
we may wonder which is subject and which object without ever reaching the clearcut answer that such a sentence in Latin would convey immediately. Accuracy and thoroughness are essential to progress in Latin to an extent that is not matched by modern languages. It is curious how often the insistence on accuracy in the study of classics is condemned as pedantic, but is approved of as essential in mathematics or science.

Reflective thinking is defined by Dewey[6] as 'judgment suspended during further inquiry; . . . the most important factor in the training of good mental habits consists in acquiring the attitude of suspended conclusion, and in mastering the various methods of searching for new materials to corroborate or refute the first suggestions that occur'. As Gray goes on to point out, 'there could hardly be a more accurate description of the process aimed at in training pupils to follow the Latin word-order in accepting the thought of a Latin sentence. It pre-eminently involves constant practice in suspending judgment, in noting and defining the limits within which the final judgment must fall, in estimating the relative value of evidence as it accumulates in the progress through the sentence . . .' By learning to make correct inferences about the case of a noun, or tense of a verb, to elucidate the structure of a sentence by a correct analysis of the word-endings, boys can be brought to understand something of the method of making correct inferences in general.

The ability to generalize can be similarly developed in the study of elementary Latin, for the three main stages of thought necessary to adequate generalization are all illustrated in its basic syntax. Recognition of what are unquestionably common features in material that is apparently different (the first and fundamental stage) is constantly exercised in translation, where the same thought may be expressed in different ways, or sentences in apparently similar form may in fact mean something quite different. The second stage, the definition of the common

[6] John Dewey, *How We Think* (1910), 13, quoted by Mason D. Gray, *The Teaching of Latin* (1929), 151-2. Cf. H. K. Hunt, *Training through Latin* (1948).

element, follows in the discussion of the syntax under consideration. Application of the general principles thus discovered and defined, which forms the natural conclusion to the threefold process, is easily encouraged by the suggestion of further examples.

There remains finally in the traditional armoury of defence of elementary Latin what C. W. Valentine[7] called 'the doctrine of grind', a particular aspect of the mental discipline argument which perhaps few would advance seriously today. By learning to grapple with such a dull and difficult subject boys develop what will be useful later, the ability to give close attention to uninteresting matters, such as are bound to bulk large in any walk of life. But even if volitional attention exercised on *one* subject developed the ability to attend to *other* subjects, many psychologists would assert that what really trains attention is the increasing interest of the subject studied or additional motives for attention. Concentrated mental effort is better developed by stimulating the pupils' interest, not killing it. Effort that never appears to achieve any results is no incentive to further effort. The view that drudgery is in itself valuable is a long exposed pedagogic fallacy. While no one would suppose that any subject can be taught at an elementary level without drudgery, the aim should be to show that it is a means to an end, not to wallow in it. Most people work best when absorbed by the interest of the work, not when their efforts are spent in trying to keep their mind on what does not of itself interest them.

As to the particular value of the difficulty of Latin, the last word is surely with Sydney Smith, who wrote in 1825, 'To the objection that it was injurious to the pupil to remove difficulties (in the study of Latin), he answered that you might just as well say that the effect of Mr Macadam's new roads would be to make the horses fat!'[8]

Yet, when all that can be said against the 'mental discipline' argument has been said, it is by no means completely refuted,

[7] *Latin, its place and value in education* (1935).
[8] Quoted by C. W. Valentine, *op. cit.*, 86.

and elementary Latin, if taught with an eye on the principles of thinking involved, can confidently be said to make some contribution to the training of the mind. Morover, it provides a complementary Arts subject, different from French, History, or English, in its special emphases, especially in its greater precision, which it would be hard to replace.

Since the abolition of compulsory Latin in America the decline in the numbers reading the subject has been marked.[9] While analogies drawn from other countries may be misleading, who among us would be so bold as to deny that such a decline is likely to set in here now that at no University is Latin a compulsory qualification for all applicants? Yet a decline of Latin on any scale comparable to that in America will remove from quite large numbers of intelligent boys and girls the possibility of studying the classics. Not having been made to learn Latin at an age when the drudgery of learning (regardless of the nature of the subject) is less apparent, children will effectively be debarred from pursuing a study of the classics when they grow older because they will lack the necessary linguistic foundation. Even now many children, with substantial acquaintance with Latin, do not know at the age of 15 or 16 whether to specialize on the Arts or Maths/Science side. Is it not likely that if a boy has to decide at 11 or 12 whether he is to take Latin (a difficult and perhaps alarming subject at first sight) in order to leave open the possibility of going on to the classical side when he is older, he will be unlikely to opt for it, however much his parents and schoolmasters may try to persuade him, unless he has a most marked linguistic bent? Yet this will be the outcome of the abolition of compulsory elementary Latin. For most children the age of effective choice of specialist study will be put still earlier in their career. Many would say it was already too early. As Algebra is to Mathematics, so elementary Latin is to classical studies, a foundation you take pains to lay when young,

[9] Cf. for example *Class. Journ.* 1956, 269 f., 309 f., 365 f., which provides figures based on the *Biennial Survey of Education* (in the U.S.) Ch. V (for 1948-9) and *Modern Languages Association Survey* for 1954-55.

but which is rightly forgotten when the building is complete. Algebra is as much or as little use to those who do not go on to a study of science or mathematics as elementary Latin is to those who do.

If, further, it is admitted that for many children, especially the abler ones, the classics are an excellent education, is it not reasonable that the opportunity to have this education or at least to know something of what it entails should be presented to as many as possible of those who might profit from it? Elementary Latin may not have the magical virtues that some defenders of the classics have liked to suppose, but it provides quite as good a training as most other school subjects at the elementary level. Is it so great a sacrifice of time that could be spent on more modern subjects for children to be given the necessary grounding in Latin to enable them to have a classical education later if they wish? To those who cry 'away with compulsion' the answer is simple: all education involves compulsion. The question is 'what should be compulsory?' No one would suggest that Mathematics should be optional, though beyond the elementary level it is a singularly useless subject for many who spend hours on it. Mathematics is rightly compulsory because some will enjoy it and wish to study it for itself to an advanced level and others will wish to use it as a tool in the study of Natural Sciences. Just as Mathematics opens the door of the mind for the number-children, so Latin for the word-children. For those, the majority, who have no built-in propensity to numbers or words but are equally at home with both, knowledge of Mathematics and Latin leaves open the choice of which subjects they will study in depth.

While, then, the continued teaching of elementary Latin can be fully justified, the whole approach needs fundamental reform. The present course to O-level must be streamlined so as to take not more than three to four years, preferably only three; the possibilities of audio-visual techniques of teaching the subject need much fuller exploration than they have so far received; the same shift of emphasis as was advocated for more advanced

students must be made towards reading the language for what it has to say, and reading it faster; and finally the language must be taught with much more explicit expression of the principles of thinking involved.

If these steps are not taken, German will oust Latin, and the study of modern languages will take the place of classics in our grammar and public schools. Even now it is the modern languages, not history or English or geography, that provide the main counter-attraction to classics for the intelligent Arts boy or girl.

Some of those who decry Latin give the impression of wishing to remove from school curricula any subject that is difficult and that may in the early stages be unrewarding. As we have seen, there is no value in drudgery for drudgery's sake, but we run the risk today of sacrificing the interests of the few, who when adult will be the creative element in society, to those of the majority. This may be a necessary compensation for educational injustice inflicted on the majority in the past, but perhaps the swing in their favour has now gone far enough. In the long run, if the few do not get the best education that we can give them, the education of the majority of the next generation will be impoverished. As T. S. Eliot has written, 'in our headlong rush to educate everybody, we are lowering our standards, and more and more abandoning the study of those subjects by which the essentials of our culture ... are transmitted; destroying our ancient edifices to make ready the ground upon which the barbarian nomads of the future will encamp in their mechanised caravans'.[10]

[10] *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (1948), 108.

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